

Can't Quit You

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Summary: Angsty little Dexter x Howdy x Pashmina x Howdy x Dexter fic. Love triangles, dirty little secrets, soap opera-style drama.

Why? Because I can. T because things might get a bit steamy. Also some language. Haters gonna hate. I am too old to be writing Hamtaro fanfiction.

1. Dexter

YES, I know I have two other stories that are sadly awaiting my attention...but this has been inside my head for too long waiting to come out. I'm really bad at this whole writing-stories-through-to-completion-without-getting-sidetracked thing. I do plan to complete everything I've started - it's just taking me a looong time.

Anyway, this is a little experiment of mine. First time writing the characters as humans. Also, writing from the characters' perspectives. Howdy x Dexter because they are my OTP. Might get a little sexy. Be warned.

* * *

><p>Friday afternoon again and I'm sitting in front of my computer as always, staring blankly at the screen, fingers resting heavy against the keyboard. This is as far as I usually get: new message open, subject line empty, a single word at the top.<p>

Howdy,

But today, I tell myself, I'll go through with it. It's bad enough that I'm too weak-willed to talk to him in person, or even call him on the phone. The least I can do is force myself to write this damn email. I take a deep breath, steel myself, and bang out an opening line.

I can't do this anymore.

Simply stated, to the point. Maybe that's all I needed? I could hit 'send' now and he'd get the message. It would be best to keep all of these stupid feelings to myself, anyway, right?

No, I should give him a bit more than that. I close my eyes, try to focus, figure out how best to word things without coming across as overly emotional.

I can't keep sharing you with her. It's breaking me down.

I'm trying to ignore the tears that have sprung up, uninvited, in the corners of my eyes, but now they're spilling down my face, and one of them has decided to travel down my nose and slip under the bridge of my glasses, which start sliding down my face. Rather than push them back, I snatch them off my face and drop them carelessly on the desk in front of me. Then I lean back, palms pressed against my face, and choke back a sob. I bite my lip to try to keep it in, a little too hard, and I can taste the blood as it seeps to the surface.

Then I hear it â€" the little 'blip' signaling a new instant message. It makes my breath catch in my throat, because it's him, I know it's him. It's always him. For a moment, I won't look. I lean forward, cross my arms on my desk and rest my face on top of them. A few more sobs find their way out, and I'm embarrassed, even though I'm alone. When did I turn into such a giant, slobbering baby? Over him?

I wait until my breath has returned to as close to normal as it's going to get, and then I glance up at the screen.

****Tonight, your place? ;)****

It's the little winky face at the end that really gets me. It's like this is all just a game to him, like he's having all the fun in the world just stringing me along.

I sit up, let out a deep sigh, try to clear my mind. Now's my chance. All I have to do is type "No." Or not even respond. I could leave the question floating there, just ignore him and go out and get in my car and drive until I'm out of town and leave this whole shitty situation behind me.

So what do I do? I click inside the message box and type,

****See you then.****

I hit send and immediately curse myself and my weakness. I'm trying to think of some way to undo what I've just done. I could say I have another engagement I'd forgotten about. Yeah, that would work. I'm deciding how to word it when the next message arrives.

****Can't wait! XOXOX****

Shit. Just like that, he's hooked me again.

For a moment I sit in silence, waiting to see if he'll say anything else, beating myself up inside for falling again. Then I return to the email I'd been typing and, against my better judgment, click the little X in the corner.

Are you sure? the program asks me. I'm beginning to think my computer has more sense than I do. I hesitate for a moment, then click the box labeled "Yes" before I can second-guess myself.

Well. Here we go again.

2. Howdy

Eight o'clock on a Friday night and I'm driving to his apartment again. It's become a weekly ritual, even if it's only been three weeks. Friday night is girls' night, which means Pashmina's out at a club or a slumber party or who knows what with Sandy and Bijou, maybe Penelope too, depending on what it is they're getting up to. Thank God for girls' night.

I won't pretend I'm _proud_ of the fact that I haven't told Pashmina about this. She hasn't said anything about us being exclusive yet, but I guess that's not exactly an excuse for actively _hiding_ my relationship with Dexter from her. Of course, I say 'relationship' in the most basic sense of the word. It's not like we're _boyfriends_ or nothin'.

Anyway, this is really _his_ fault, come to think of it. He was the one who told me to ask her out 'cuz he'd 'lost interest'.

"I'm done with the whole thing," he'd said. "Honestly, I guess I was only chasing her to annoy you. She's not really my type." At the time, I didn't realize that his 'type' was guys. More specifically, _me_.

"Well, that's boring," I'd told him. "Where's the fun in chasing tail if there's no competition?"

"She still has to _agree_ to go out with you," he'd reminded me. "Good luck with _that_."

But she _did_ agree, and I guess Dexter wasn't expecting that, seeing as she'd never shown any interest in me before. Turns out the reason she wouldn't date either of us before was that she didn't want to ruin our friendship â€" Pashmina's thoughtful that way. If I'm to be honest with myself, I probably don't deserve a gal as sweet as that. In any case, once I explained how Dexter was movin' on, she didn't even hesitate.

That was three weeks ago today, when I'd asked her out. We'd set a date for Saturday night since Pashy had her girls' night on Friday, so I'd called up Dexter and invited myself to his apartment to share the news over a few beers. And maybe rub it in his face just a little.

'Course I'd expected him to be surprised, maybe even a little pissed, that she'd been so eager to go out with me as soon as he'd dropped out of the race. But when I told him I had a hot date with Pashmina lined up for the following night, he'd looked hurt. He'd actually tried to sound supportive, happy for me, even, but I could see right through him.

"You're upset." That's what I'd told him.

"No, I â€" I'm just amazed that she actually said yes," he'd replied, but his smile was forced.

"Bullshit!" I'd known him long enough to know when he was lying, and he should have known that I would know. "You told me you weren't interested in her anymore. I thought you'd be okay with this!"

"I am okay!" he'd asserted, even less convincingly.

"No, you're not!" I was shouting at that point. I hated that he was lying to me, and that he thought I was dumb enough not to see through it. "Don't bullshit me! You still like her, don't you?"

"No, I swear," he said. "I don't â€" it's not Pashmina." For the first time, it didn't come across as a blatant falsehood. So I'd gone along with it.

"Then what?"

He'd looked away then, turning his gaze to the floor, like he didn't want to tell me. I was about to press him further when it dawned on me.

"Dex, if it's not Pashmina, then the only reason you could possibly be upset about this is if you like me."

He hadn't replied, but I saw a startled expression in his eyes as they darted in my direction and then, quickly, back at the floor.

"It is me, isn't it?"

Still no reply, but that was okay, because I had more than enough to say for the both of us.

"God DAMN it, Dex!" I grabbed him by the stupid collar of his stupid blue button-down shirt and shoved him against the stupid wall. It was probably a bit of an overreaction, but I was so confused and angry at the time that I wasn't making any effort to hold myself back.

"Why?" I'd demanded. "Why are you telling me this now? How long have you felt this way?"

He seemed dazed. He wasn't making any effort to push me away; he just gave me a lost, apologetic look and said "A couple years, I guess."

"A couple years?" I was incredulous. All this wasted time. "And you never told me?"

"I didn't think it was a good idea," he'd admitted. "Since you're not â€" you knowâ€" I knew there wasn't any possibility of anything happening, and it would just make things weird between us."

"God DAMN it," I repeated. "Dex, I can't even begin to tell you how much â€" how long I've wanted you." It was the truth.

His expression changed from one of dismay and regret to utter

astonishment.

"Then why â€" you're so mad at me for never saying anything, but what about you? You never told me â€" "

"How many hints do I have to drop?" I was frustrated beyond belief. "All of the times I've commented on how dashing you looked, all of the Valentine's Day gifts, hell, there were even a couple of clearly flirtatious emails â€" "

"I always just assumed you were joking!" he groaned. "Because that's what you do, Howdy, you joke around and you make fun and you're never serious about anything, so how the hell was I supposed to know how you felt? Do you really think I'm just that dense?"

"You are that dense," I'd insisted, my hands clenched so tightly around the collar of his shirt that I could feel my fingernails digging into my palms from the other side of the fabric. "You are a dense, clueless, moronic, lying little shit!"

He gave me a look then that I knew all too well â€" a look he reserved for our most bitter disputes, one of intense rage bordering on hatred. I honestly thought he might just up and slug me. Instead, he grabbed me by the shoulders and pressed his mouth against mine.

I'd never kissed another guy before, and I guess I never realized what I was missing. Women are fantastic â€" they're so soft, and curvy, and I can't argue with a nice pair of tits. But there's something about a guy's mouth. Gals, when they kiss â€" at least the few I've had any experience with â€" they're gentle, light, slow. Romantic, I guess. When Dexter kissed me, it was rough, forceful. There was an intense passion behind it that I realized was, at least in some part, anger-driven. And it turned me on more than anything I'd felt before.

Five minutes later he was sitting on the couch and I was on top of him, straddling his hips. His hands were at my waist and our lips were still locked together. But when I started fumbling with the top button on his shirt, he'd suddenly pulled away.

"Wait," he'd said, pressing both hands against my chest to stop me moving any closer. "Howdy, I â€"as much as I want this, we shouldn't. We can't. You're with Pashmina. I can't do that to her."

"It's just a date," I'd insisted, pushing his hands away so I could get at those buttons again. "She's not my girlfriend. For all I know, she could be hitting on some stranger as we speak. Maybe they're having girls' night at the singles' bar. Don't make any difference."

"First of all," Dexter replied, clearly perturbed now, "you know as well as I do that Pashmina's not that kind of girl." He grabbed both of my wrists to impede any further progress on my part â€" I'd made it to three buttons at this point. "And secondly, even if she isn't your girlfriend, that doesn't give you liberty to do whatever you want if the two of you haven't made your expectations clear. How would you feel if she'd asked you out, and then you found out she'd slept with someone else the very same day?"

I conceded defeat in my efforts to relieve Dexter of his shirt at that point, sighed, and slumped back onto the couch.

"Fine, you're right." He was right. But after a few moments of silence between us, I decided to press my luck. "Can I crash here tonight? I have had a few drinks. It would be irresponsible to let me drive home."

"I'll call you a cab."

"Why? I ain't yellow, and I certainly don't charge by the mile." I gave him a smirk. He rolled his eyes, clearly unamused, as always, by the pun.

"You know what? Fine. Ok. You can stay here," he finally agreed. "But you're sleeping on the couch."

"Whatever you say, Doctor Decorum."

I didn't sleep on the couch that night. Or the following Friday.

And I don't intend to tonight, either.

3. Pashmina

Sandy's eyeing me from across the table with that knowing smirk on her face. She's on her third beer, completely loosened up, and I know right then that if I don't say something, she will.

I don't mind. It doesn't matter who knows, and I'd just as soon let Sandy have her fun. So I lean back in my chair, arms crossed, and return her smile.

"Something on your mind, Sandy?"

"You," she replies, eyes narrowing as she points an accusing finger my way. "You've got a new boyfriend, don't you? I called you last Saturday night and you didn't answer. You're always home on Saturday nights. You always answer. Unless you're on a date!"

"Ooh!" Bijou turns to me abruptly, claps her hands cheerily a couple times, then props her elbows on the table and rests her chin on top of her hands. "Do tell!"

"First, he's not my boyfriend," I assert. "We've been on two dates, that's all. I'm not going to rush into something."

"Well, who is it?" Sandy demands, leaning forward across the table and staring me down.

I start to answer, but am interrupted when I hear the front door swing open and Penelope's raucous greeting from the next room.

"Evening, ladies!" she calls, and emerges into the kitchen, where the three of us are seated around the table, a few seconds later. There's a textbook tucked under her arm, which she carelessly discards on the

counter before throwing the fridge open and diving inside.

"Hey, Penny," I smile. "How was study group?"

"Lame, as always," she sighs, reappearing from behind the door of the fridge with a beer in her hand. I raise an eyebrow; she takes the hint, swaps the beer for a Coke and nudges the fridge closed with her hips.

"So," she continues, smiling warmly at Sandy and Bijou, "did you tell them about you and Howdy yet?"

Bijou stifles a sound that's somewhere between a gasp and a giggle-snort. Sandy, on the other hand, doesn't make any attempt at modesty.

"_Howdy_?" she laughs, throwing her head back and bringing her fist down against the table in the same motion. The beer that's still clutched between her fingers sloshes in its container and a few drops splash onto her hand. She wipes them off on the leg of her jeans and continues.

"I never even _imagined_ the two of you together!" she insists, her smile so broad that I'm pretty sure I can pick out every last one of her teeth. "You're soâ€¦down to earth, and he's so â€¦" I don't know, _out there_."

"He's _fun_," Penelope says, a little defensively, as she grabs a seat at the table.

"Of course," Bijou replies, recovered from her brief moment of impropriety. "We just always assumed that if Pashmina decided to date one of them, it would have been Dexter."

"Why?" I ask, but Sandy cuts me off with a sudden excited gasp. Neither of them seem to notice that I haven't managed to get a word in yet.

"Pashmina!" Sandy's still got the same ridiculous grin across her face, but now there's a sly, mischievous character to her expression as well. "If you're not with Dexter, can I have him?"

Bijou looks startled and turns to Sandy abruptly.

"Did something happen between you and Maxwell?" she gasps.

"No, nothing like that," Sandy reassures her. "I'm just trying to get him to be more _adventurous_. And girlfriend, I would not mind being the meat in _that_ sandwich."

Bijou looks confused.

"Sandy wants a three-way with the two nerdiest guys we know," Penelope clarifies. Sometimes it worries me that she apparently knows more about sex than Bijou does.

Now Bijou just looks offended.

"_Sandy!_" she exclaims, glaring at her. "You're going to put unseemly ideas in Penelope's head! Don't talk about things like â€¦"

She's cut off suddenly by the sound of her cell phone ringing. She hesitates for a moment before fishing it from her purse and glancing down at the screen.

"It's Boss, isn't it?" Sandy demands, after Bijou appears to have decided against answering it. Sandy snatches it from her, despite Bijou's protests.

"It is," Sandy confirms as the phone falls silent in her hands. "Are you still ignoring him?" Bijou tries to reclaim her stolen property, but Sandy keeps her at bay with one arm while scrolling through her texts with the opposite hand. "'Hey, how are you'â€|'When can I see you again'â€|'Do you even want to see me again'â€|'Please give me an answer either way'â€|Bijou!" Sandy barks as she tosses the phone onto the table. "This is pathetic. On you, I mean. The least you can do is let him know if you don't want to see him anymore."

"I know," Bijou sighs as she grabs up her phone and stashes it away in her purse again. "But I haven't decided yetâ€|"

"Right, I forgot. Because you're really into Hamtaro, but at the same time you know how much you'd like another night with Boss's giant â€"

"SANDY!"

At times like these, I've found it's best not to get involved. Instead, I grab a beer from the fridge, crack it open and hand it to Penelope.

"Just this once," I tell her. "It's going to be a long night."

End
file.